

**Friendship Heights Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2010**

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Voting Members Present

Joe Dixon	GEICO
Marc Esposito	Bloomingtondale's
William P. Farley (Vice-Chair)	Town of Somerset
Kerri Gates	The JBG Companies
Tiffany Gee	Chevy Chase Land Company
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council

Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff Present

Nakengi Byrd	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center
Christine McGrew	M-NCPPC
Christine Norris	Wisconsin Place
David Torchinsky	Law Offices of Binstock, Torchinsky and Associates

Guests

Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village

Abbreviations Used Herein Include:

ACH = Automated Clearing House
ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act
BRAC = Base Realignment and Closure
CID = Commuter Information Day
COG = Council of Governments
CSS = Commuter Services Section
GRH = Guaranteed Ride Home
MC DOT = Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation
PIO = Public Information Office
TDM = Transportation Demand Management
TIGER = Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery
TMP = Traffic Mitigation Plan

Item 1, 2 – Introductions, Minutes approval: Members introduced themselves and January's minutes were approved.

Item 3 – Chair's Comments: **Chairman Robert Schwarzbart** announced that he and **James Carlson** presented the Committee's FY11 Budget Priorities recommendations to **County Executive Isiah Leggett** on January 28, 2010. **Mr. Schwarzbart** noted the TMD Committee accomplishments at the meeting, such as the campaign to preserve the Friendship Heights bus terminal and efforts to alleviate dangerous pedestrian safety issues.

Mr. Schwarzbart reported that The Irene's passenger van was moved from the Wisconsin Avenue and Wisconsin Circle stop to the corner of Western Avenue at the bus turn-in, which is safer for riders. The issue was resolved through the intervention of **Joan Kleinman**, District Director of **Rep. Chris Van Hollen's** office. **Mr. Schwarzbart** noted correspondence regarding this issue in the meeting packet. This included an appreciation form Mary Catherine Johns, The Irene's Property Director.

David Glass wrote to **Council President Nancy Floreen** expressing his opposition to the TRiPS Commuter Store. **Mr. Schwarzbart** sent a letter in response which stated the Committee's strong support of the store with a six to one vote margin.

Mr. Schwarzbart welcomed **Joseph Dixon** from GEICO and **Kerri Gates** from The JBG Companies as new voting members of the Advisory Committee.

Mr. Schwarzbart announced that invited guest, **Councilmember Roger Berliner** was unable to attend the meeting and he will be rescheduled at another date.

Item 4 – Traffic Mitigation Plan Annual Reports: **Mr. Carlson** gave a summary of the Traffic Mitigation Plan (TMP) Annual Reports of businesses in the Friendship Heights TMD. A summary sheet of the report was included in the meeting packet. The summary described the compliance efforts of companies and advised the Committee members whether or not to recommend approval to the Director MC DOT. There are eight mandatory measures in a TMP, which are:

1. Having a point of contact, or liaison, in the company;
2. Posting of transit and alternative transportation information;
3. Providing a permanent transit information display in a highly visible area;
4. Hosting a Commuter Information Day (CID) for employees twice a year;
5. Promoting the regional Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program;
6. Posting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) information;
7. Participating in the County's Annual Commuter Survey; and
8. Providing an Annual Report of activities in fulfillment of the TMP.

Coordinating with some companies to schedule CIDs has been a challenge because CSS has been short staffed; however progress has been made with those companies.

Mr. Carlson asked that the Committee recommend approval for the following companies:

- The Ritz-Carlton
- Saks Fifth Avenue-contingent on hosting a CID
- GEICO-contingent on hosting a CID

- Abacus Technology Corp.
- Washington Eye Physicians & Surgeons
- CapitalSource (sic)
- United Insurance Management
- Polinger, Shannon & Luchs-contingent on hosting a CID
- Brighton Gardens-contingent on 2010 survey participation

Mr. Carlson asked the Committee to not recommend Cardiology and Internal Medicine for approval due to the nonresponsive Annual Report. Mr. Carlson has been in contact with the company and will assist with the compliance issues.

In response to **Mr. Schwarzbart's** questions about employers' non-compliance, **Mr. Carlson** explained that companies that are not compliant would be in violation of the law, in this case a Class C misdemeanor. Letters are sent to employers warning of the consequences of non-compliance which could ultimately result in the imposition of a monetary fine.

Mr. Carlson said that most companies are compliant with the TMP process; for the small minority that is not, this is usually due to the complicated structure of some larger. For example, the Bloomingdale's TMP had to be handled by their legal team in New York.

The list of companies included in the summary sheet does not include all the businesses within the FH TMD that are required to submit TMPs. The Commuter Services team is contacting the other companies.

Mr. Carlson explained the online process for businesses to submit TMP and TMP Annual Report information. Submission of the Annual Report consists of updating last year's TMP information with new information. The information is presented in a side-by-side format for convenience.

Sheila Wilson described the client database which CSS uses to track businesses, TMP and Annual Report submittals. The database keeps records other information, such as the number of attendees at the CID events, rideshare applications and a company's efforts to promote transit and other alternatives.

Ms. Brecher farther explained that the system is designed to track employer's progress so when they submit their Annual Reports, CSS can provide assistance.

Mr. Carlson said that resubmitted Annual Reports and TMPs will be forthcoming to the Committee as well.

Mr. Carlson said many new companies are identified using building management tenant lists, Dunn and Bradstreet listings, new business opening announcements and other methods. The TMP is for companies with 25 or more employees during the company's largest shift. Friendship Heights is unique because of the many medical offices and small boutique retail shops in the area, which tend to employ fewer than 25 employees.

The Committee voted to recommend approval of the Friendship Heights TMD Traffic Mitigation Plan Annual Reports, based on staff recommendation, with the exception of the single company out of compliance (Cardiology and Internal Medicine).

Item 5 – Social Media Marketing: **Ms. Brecher** gave a presentation on Social Media Marketing, explaining how jurisdictions around the country are using networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to promote their programs. **Ms. Brecher**, referring to a study which tracked the growth of Facebook, showed female usage higher than for males. From July – August 2009 female usage jumped from 55 to 58 percent. Facebook user ages 18-24 were at 12 percent, which is one of the target market age groups for transit. Older users tend to be more locked into their transportation habits. The Washington DC metropolitan area comprises 30 percent of the Facebook user base. “Sex, Drugs and Rock-N-Roll” were the main interest items of Facebook members. Twitter has a younger age usage than Facebook.

Ms. Brecher said she would do more research, and if anyone was interested in more information **Mr. Carlson** would email the chart which shows the different websites and what they offer.

Ms. Brecher described how transportation demand management (TDM) organizations in New Jersey and Toronto are using social media to market alternative transportation, such as becoming a Fan on Facebook, providing information on transit legislation, or transit studies. She also showed a sample of the blog from Arlington Commuter Services by Director **Chris Hamilton**; however, blogging is an issue that Montgomery County they would have to clear through the Public Information Office before it could be sent, affecting the timeliness of content.

Ms. Brecher explained that she is not sure if the County would allow the Friendship Heights TMD to have a stand alone Facebook site, since they might constitute endorsing the site’s content. The County does has it own Facebook page, which is populated by the Public Information Office (PIO). **Ms. Brecher** encouraged members to look at the site and suggested working together to find ways of linking advertising into user markets.

In addition, **Mr. Carlson** encouraged members to sign up for the Alert Montgomery system for weather and other emergency notices. The Alert Montgomery system has an information protocol enabling emergency information to be distributed during PIO off hours. To sign up, click the Alert Montgomery link on the right hand menu of the County’s home page at: www.montgomerycountymd.gov.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked if telework options are advertised as a means of cutting back on traffic. **Ms. Brecher** said Commuter Services promotes telework to all Montgomery County area businesses and offers consulting services through Council of Governments (COG) for businesses that show an interest. County policy on telework varies by department needs; however, there is an effort to expand telework and a person from Human Resources is tasked with the initiative.

Ms. Brecher said she will work with **David Torchinsky** to continue researching teleworking options and asked for the Committee’s assistance as well. The County Council has passed legislation giving area businesses tax credits for supplying laptops to teleworkers.

Ms. Brecher informed the committee about the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project, which has a website providing for community participation in conducting bicycle and pedestrian traffic counts. The project is sponsored by the Institute of Transportation Engineers

and Alta Planning & Design, which provides consultation on bike-related planning. The dates for the counts are May 11-13th, which is a week before Bike to Work Day, May 15th. **Ms. Brecher** believes that this will be of benefit because bikers and pedestrians are under counted in traffic studies.

Montgomery County Government received TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) funding for transportation funding, which could be used for bus priority lanes and BRAC transportation projects. However, the County did not receive a bike sharing grant and is looking for more economical alternative biking systems.

Mr. Schwarzbart raised questions about the relevancy and safety of bicycles in the Friendship Heights TMD in view of that area's heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic and largely alpine terrain once one leaves Wisconsin Avenue and enters Friendship Heights Village. There are not any special accommodations made for bicycles, as may be the case in other parts of the County, and when the occasional bike does appear it tends to tie up traffic.

Ms. Brecher said that the necessary infrastructure to support bicycle use is not yet available in all areas of the County. She said, in response to bicyclists tying up other vehicular traffic, that bicycle riders are permitted to be on sidewalks, provided of course, they are riding safely. Friendship Heights has a high concentration of pedestrians, however, so riding safely can present challenges. Most serious riders do not ride on the sidewalks; they use the street, and they are considered a vehicle. A bicycle is transporting a single person just as a car is taking a single person. **Ms. Brecher** agreed with **Mr. Schwarzbart** that safety is an issue, especially when the bicycle is in traffic. **Ms. Brecher** added that the Friendship Heights Sector Plan should be the reference source for any long-term plan for bicycle accommodations in the area. **Ms. Brecher** said that bicycle use can present a unique challenge in the TMD.

Mr. Mansfield said there is a dedicated bike lane next to Bloomingdale's, but no one is sure where it will ultimately lead. It was obviously a developer requirement.

Ms. Brecher was not sure what the Friendship Heights Sector Plan called for, but in general, the partial bike lanes that one sees as developers finish projects are supposed to be part of a larger connected network as redevelopment continues. It would be interesting to look at the Master Plan and see what the long term goal is for bicycle use. **Ms. Brecher** suggested bringing the Sector Plan to the next meeting.

Ms. Gee said that the Chevy Chase Center development only had to provide storage for bikes, but not a dedicated bike lane in its development contract.

Item 6 – July Meeting: **Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested canceling July's meeting due to historically poor attendance. **Mr. Carlson** said the Committee should consider that cancellation of the July's meeting would mean a two month period without a meeting since the committee already does not meet in August. However, there is an option to call an emergency meeting if needed. Committee members agreed to revisit the issue during the June meeting.

Item 7 – Commuter Services Updates: **Ms. Brecher** said **County Executive Isiah Leggett's** budget will be submitted to County Council on March 15th. Super Fareshare (SFS) programs have been suspended in the FY10 Savings Plan which was adopted by County Council. **Ms. Brecher** said furthermore that it was highly unlikely that the programs would be restored in

FY11. She said that most businesses in some way are continuing to offer transit subsidies; only a few have discontinued providing transit benefits for their employees.

The CSS team is helping employers transition by working with Metro to see if the County can transfer payments for SmartBenefits for those companies that prefer to pay by check. Metro does not accept checks, either personal or corporate, so accepting checks for employers and then using an ACH wire transfer (Automated Clearing House, an electronic network for financial transactions) – one of the two modes used for payment, the other being credit card – the County can still provide a value-added service to the community. **Ms. Brecher** added that most businesses are able to use either a credit card or ACH, but there are a few companies, even some larger ones, that still prefer to pay by check.

Ms. Brecher said that in addition to allowing employers to continue to pay by check, the County was also exploring the possibility that Metrochek Vouchers, the only benefit currently not loadable onto a SmarTrip card, will be delivered to CSS for distribution to employers in Montgomery County. Thus employers could avoid the trip to Metro Center to pick them up. Vouchers can be delivered, but the order must be for \$1,000 or more. Commuter Services may be able to arrange for the Vouchers to be picked at the TRiPS Commuter Stores in Friendship Heights and Silver Spring. At present, Vouchers are used as a medium of exchange for MARC Rail, MTA Commuter Buses and VRE, and for weekly and monthly passes. SmarTrip cannot at present handle passes, so fare is deducted per trip. SmarTrip changes, currently in development, will address passes.

Ms. Brecher said it is still too early to know the effect of the Super FareShare suspension. A few companies have indicated they will continue to provide a benefit level equal to the combined contributions of the employer and the County; some have said they will continue to offer a benefit but at a reduced amount, covering just whatever the company was providing before the program was suspended; and a very few companies have dropped out of SmartBenefits altogether.

Ms. Brecher reiterated the Super FareShare guidelines: The first year is the “Dollar Deal,” which provided up to \$114 per employee, per month for a \$1 contribution from the employer. During Years 2-5 the contribution is 50/50 for the employer and the County. During Years 6-9 the County’s contribution is reduced by 10 percent per year, while the employer’s contribution would increase by 10 percent. By the final year of the program, the employer contribution is 90 percent; the County’s is 10 percent.

Mr. Schwarzbart stated that the Village of Friendship Heights has tried to get an increased presence from the Montgomery County Police. The response has been to offer bicycle patrols. **Mr. Schwarzbart** indicated that, given the hills around Friendship Heights, this may not be an effective deterrent. There is a police field office, a converted single family home, on North Park Avenue but it is usually unstaffed. A ‘substation’ usually implies a staffed location; a ‘field office’ is generally not staffed. The Friendship Heights field office provides a place to check in on a regular basis.

Jim Carlson said that since the last meeting he had been in touch with **Denise Gill**, the Montgomery County Police Community Liaison Officer. She said that, although she could not make this meeting, she will attend future meetings or assign someone to come.

Julian Mansfield said there would be a police training exercise at the Friendship Heights Metro station on Feb. 24-25. The exercise, which simulates gunfire between two shooters in the station with passengers are injured or killed, will start at 12:30 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 25. The Metro Transit Police Department special response team will respond to the incident, along with the police, fire and emergency medical services personnel from the District of Columbia and Montgomery County, and the FBI. The drill will test the integrated response and incident coordination of the different agencies and jurisdictions involved. **Mr. Mansfield** said he is expecting to receive calls from residents even though there has been advance notice of the event.

Ms. Brecher added that most of the action will be taking place below ground and emergency vehicles will not be using their flashing lights.

Mr. Mansfield said streets will remain open and disruption should be minimal. The exercise takes place after the station closes.

Tiffany Gee said she received an email alert and would evaluate whether or not it is necessary to advise Chevy Chase Center tenants. Clyde's and other restaurants are generally still open at midnight.

Mr. Schwarzbart said that normally the next meeting date would be March 9, but indicated that **Ms. Brecher** would like to propose a new meeting date. **Ms. Brecher** said that the County Executive's FY11 budget is presented to Council on March 15th. Prior to that date, County personnel cannot discuss the specifics of the budget. Therefore, since the current meeting later in the month, it may be advantageous to meet after the Executive's budget is released. It is not essential, but the next meeting date after release of the budget would be April 13th, almost a month later. If members wished to address budget items to Council, a later March meeting will allow more time to do so. The Council has work sessions on the budget and then adopts it in mid-May, so there would also still be some time in which to respond should the Committee decide to go ahead with the scheduled March 9th meeting.

Mr. Schwarzbart said he may have a conflict in the later time frame, so he would ask Vice-Chair **William Farley** to step in if the Committee votes for a later date.

Bill McCloskey said that it would be preferable to meet prior to the April meeting, since the window for responding is smaller. **Mr. McCloskey** suggested March 16th as the next meeting date.

Mr. Farley suggested March 23rd, since that would allow a week to study the budget. **Mr. Schwarzbart** agreed that having some time to look at the budget would be preferred, and also put forward March 23rd.

The Committee voted to reconvene on March 23rd. **Mr. Farley** agreed to Chair.

Meeting adjourned at 10 AM

Next meeting date: March 23, 2010